

Lawn and Garden Safety

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) urges people to use caution and common sense when tending lawns and gardens this season. CPSC data show that each year over 400,000 people are treated in hospital emergency rooms for injuries from lawn and garden tools.

Consumers must do their part to care for their own safety. Following manufacturer's' instructions and using equipment responsibly are key.

Motorized lawn mowers and lawn tractors are especially dangerous. Over 25,000 injuries and 75 deaths occur each year on or near these machines every year. Tragically, 1 in 5 of the deaths involve a child. CPSC estimates that most of the fatal injuries to children occurred when the child was in the path of a moving mower.

CPSC recommends that consumers take precautions to prevent lawn and garden equipment-related injuries:

Dress properly for the job. Wear close-fitting clothing, no jewelry, sturdy shoes with slip-resistant soles, eye and hearing protection, and heavy gloves when using motor-driven equipment.

Pick up debris and trash. Before starting up machinery, remove objects from the area with potential to injure people or damage the equipment. Sticks, stones, glass, wires, and metal parts become dangerous projectiles when thrown from under a mower.

Maintain all original parts to the machine. Make sure the safety devices, shields and guards are in place and functioning properly before starting work.

Make equipment off-limits to children. Never let a child ride or operate a garden tractor or riding mower, even with supervision. Even teenagers need adult supervision, along with physical strength and maturity of judgement to operate mowers safely.

Restrict children from the work area. Keep children indoors and under supervision at all times when power equipment is in use. Young children move quickly and are attracted to mowers and mowing activity. This is especially true if they have been allowed to ride on a mower before.

Lock out power before servicing, parking or storing equipment. Unplug electric tools and disconnect spark plug wires before making, repairs or adjustments, sharpening blades, or clearing jams. Be sure power tools are turned off and made inoperable if they must be left unattended, even for a brief period, to prevent use by children.

Handle gasoline with extreme care. Always turn off engines and allow the machine to cool before filling gas tanks. Wipe up spills immediately and store fuel in an approved container away from the house. Never smoke or use any type of flame around gasoline or gas-operated equipment.

Use electricity safely. Never work with electric power tools in damp or wet conditions. Use a ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) on all circuits used with outdoor electric tools. Be sure that extension cords are in good condition, are rated for outdoor use, and are the proper gauges for the amperage of the tool.